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TAGS: PGOV PINR PREL GB IR

SUBJECT: GABONESE FOREIGN MINISTER VISITS IRAN

Classified By: Political Officer Christopher Gunning for reasons
1.4 (b) and (d).

Summary

¶1. (C) According to the French Ambassador to Gabon, Gabonese Foreign Minister Paul Toungui recently visited Tehran where he and Iranian Foreign Minister Mottaki talked about visas, improving economic relations, and establishing regular talks between Gabon and Iran. The French Ambassador said that Toungui downplayed the visit and stated that he does not expect the two countries to open embassies in the other any time soon. End Summary.

Gabon and Iran Affirm Ties

¶2. (C) Gabonese Foreign Minister Paul Toungi discussed his recent trip to Tehran with French Ambassador to Gabon Jean-Didier Roisin, who reported the discussion with Ambassador Reddick. Toungui noted that he traveled to Tehran for only 24 hours and in response to a direct request of the Iranian Government. Four agreements were signed which are to promote travel, increase talks between the foreign ministries, establish a joint-economic forum, and lay the groundwork to open embassies in the two countries. Toungui underscored the visit as "a big deal,"⁸ and that neither country would open a new embassy in the other country any time soon.

¶3. (C) Foreign Minister Toungui and Iranian Foreign Minister Mottaki signed an agreement allowing for reciprocal visa-waivers for business people. While a press release from the Tehran Times claims political officials⁸ will also receive visa-waivers, Toungui reinforced that this is not the case.

Comment

¶4. (C) We suspect the Gabonese foreign minister was deliberately minimizing the Iranian overture in speaking to a senior western diplomat. Nevertheless Iranian press reports seem to have exaggerated the significance of the visit, at least from Gabon's perspective. End Comment.

REDDICK